

# Liberty Online Ministries



One Plus One  
Equals One



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# The Ball and Chain

## One Plus One Equals One – Introduction

“The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.’ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”

Genesis 2:23-24

“Marriage is a wonderful institution, but who would want to live in an institution.” - H. L. Mencken

Would you agree with this quote? When was the last time you heard a joke about marriage? I would guess that it reflected more of the quote above than it depicted a positive perspective of marriage. Unfortunately, people consider marriage an institution that they want no part of. They do not see any benefits to marriage.

How does the above quote strike you? How would you describe your marriage?

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How does our world view marriage?

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If someone lived on a deserted island for most of his or her early life and then made it back to civilization, it would not take long for them to see society’s attitude of marriage. Everyone has their own view of marriage which only confuses everyone else. Pile on top of that the movie industry. It is hard to find a movie that promotes marriage in a positive light. They can make so much more money when they ridicule and laugh at marriage. Affairs and immorality are so much more exciting and profitable than a good marriage.

Society cannot help us, but then again, our experiences are hard to work through as well. It is hard to find a family that has not been touched by divorce, immorality, or abuse. We think a good marriage is a home that has two people who got a paper signed and now share the same last name and a place to live. They do not fight too much and manage to put up with each other. With this in mind, many of us have experienced loved ones going through a divorce or dealing with infidelity. We may have been part of broken relationships and yelling matches. We make excuses by saying, “Everyone goes through this. This is normal.”

Have you experienced heartbreak in through a broken marriage? What happened?

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The world wants us to think that marriage is no big deal, but if marriage was no big deal then why are broken marriages so devastating? It does not add up.

"Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. 'For I hate divorce,' says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'and him who covers his garment with wrong,' says the Lord of hosts. So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

Malachi 2:14-16

It is no wonder many people see marriage as the "ball and chain." It is one of the few things that has been attacked, trashed, and thrown about since the beginning.

How has the attack of marriage affected our society? If marriage falls apart, what are the results?

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When society confuses marriage, then everything else becomes confused or begins to fall apart.

- The roles of the husband and wife
- The security of the home
- The building blocks of the church
- The nucleus of the community
- The foundation of the government
- The understanding of sexuality
- The relationship of God to mankind

Of course, all this is not clearly seen, because the enemy does not want us to know that a proper understanding of marriage is a fundamental pillar to our growth and development. Let's take a little quiz. This will help us see how important marriage is and maybe motivate us to understand it differently.

1. When was marriage instituted?

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2. Why was marriage instituted?

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3. Who created and instituted marriage?

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4. Out of the Ten Commandments, two reference marriage. What are they?

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5. Scripture uses marriage as an analogy for what relationship in the Old Testament?

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6. Scripture uses marriage as an analogy for what relationship in the New Testament?

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7. What is one role of the husband?

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8. What is the one role of the wife?

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9. Why was sex created?

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10. Is there ever a point within marriage that it can never be restored?

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11. How does the present marriage of parents affect the future marriage of children?

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How did you do? I am not asking how many right answers you got, but how did this quiz affect you? Did you answer confidently or with hesitation? It's okay. These next few pages will take us on a journey through Scripture as we seek to understand marriage the way God intended. We as a society have been aiming at the wrong mark and standard for too long. We have settled for good marriages when God wants us to experience great marriages.

Our standard for marriage is low. God's standard for marriage is far greater. With that said, I believe that every marriage can be saved. I understand that every marriage will not be saved, but that does not change the potential for reconciliation.

God is for marriage. He has been since the beginning of time since he created it. Anybody who has said "I do" may have made some poor decisions, but that does not cancel out the potential of God in making the worst marriage into something wonderful. Likewise, anyone who has made mistakes and messed up their marriage can still reach for the standard of marriage that God has.

No one is beyond God and God is still into working miracles.

God wants to heal your marriage and build it into something that brings Him glory. Are you ready to look into marriage the way God intended?

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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Oh, by the way, for those that are looking for the answers to the quiz – they can be found throughout the study. I was not going to make it that easy!

"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Genesis 1:27

# The Economy of the Kingdom

## One Plus One Equals One – Genesis 1 – God's Intention

I loved the subject of math.

Some people would strongly disagree with me, but I enjoyed math class. It seemed like there were always rules and constants. Language has rules, but then there are exceptions to the rules, and then exceptions to those exceptions. Literature was just random, but math was always the same.

Or at least, that's what I thought.

In God's economy, there is one time where  $1+1=1$ . How is this possible? Marriage.

Describe how marriage is  $1+1=1$ .

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It is our misunderstanding of this equation that affects our ability and potential to have a great marriage.

How would you explain how society views marriage?

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Our society sees marriage as  $1+1=2$  which would be a normal assumption, if society created marriage. It didn't. Our society sees marriage as the joining of forces or the coming together of two people into one family unit. At times the word marriage is used of the joining of things other than a man and a woman. They might say the marriage of poetry and painting or of words and music, but this confuses what marriage is by God's definition.

In the case of words and music, the two can always be separated again with little or no problem. This is not true of a husband and wife.

In math, the lowest whole positive number is 1. Once you move past 1, you move into fractions or negative numbers. What happens when you try to separate the number 1? You are left with pieces and parts and no whole number. You can separate 2 or 5 or 1,230 and still have whole numbers, but 1 cannot be separated into different whole numbers.

How does this understanding carry into marriage?

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I can understand how this might be confusing so let's take a look at Genesis 1 where God created marriage and see how He does the math.

"The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.'" Genesis 2:22-23

"I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not fulfilled the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts-- the officials of Judah and the officials of Jerusalem, the court officers and the priests and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf-- I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. And their dead bodies will be food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth." Jeremiah 34:18-20

In verses, 26-30 we see the abbreviated account of the creation of mankind. This may be the short story, but the content is very telling. Moses writes that God created man in His own image. Our first inclination is to think gender, but the word "man" is reference to mankind. God says, "Let Us make man in our image." This is the first time that there is a discussion about creation. Before it was merely statements, but here the God-head is talking.

In the same passage we find that God made them, male and female, in His image. Man and woman in marriage display the image of God. This oneness is further evidenced when God tells them to rule over everything. Did you catch it? God told the man and woman to rule together. It was not just a command given to the man. Herein lies oneness.

As if that is not enough, chapter two is the extended version of the creation of man. Moses comes back to the creation of man to give more detail to what took place. God helped man to know that he was not complete, that he needed a helper.

Men, just so you know, we needed help from the beginning!

God then takes a rib from the man and creates the woman. The man wakes up and likes what he sees and then speaks poetry, trying to be romantic, no doubt. Moses then gives commentary and explains how the man and woman become one. The term used here for one is singular. There is no sense of a plural.  $1+1=1$

Why do you think God took such care in making this clear?

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You may be wondering why I am going through such great lengths to establish the fact that in marriage  $1+1=1$ . Remember, our society claims that marriage is not that big of a deal since it is still two people. Divorce is an epidemic that continues to reach into every home. We are continually bombarded with messages that claim marriage is not a big commitment. God would say otherwise.

Many of your movies that include divorce show how it was a mistake to get married and that everyone can admit the mistake and try someone else out. No hard feelings.

How would you define covenant?

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God sees it as a binding relationship for life. In fact, the Old Testament gives us an understanding of the importance of covenant. When two people would make a covenant with each other they would take a goat or lamb and slay it. They would then separate the beast in half, placing one half to the side and the other opposite to it. The two parties would then walk through the halved animal. This act proclaimed, "May we be like this animal torn in half if we break this covenant." See Genesis 15 as this explains the covenant between God and Abram.

“...and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

Matthew 19:5-6

Moses says, “They shall become one flesh!” To try to separate the one flesh means to tear it in half.

How does this perspective of covenant differ from the world?

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Jesus confirmed Moses’ words in Matthew 19:4-6. He restated that the man and woman become one flesh, but then gave further commentary that God put them together and no one should seek to separate them. These are solemn and binding words.

So  $1+1=1$ .

As we embrace this understanding it puts marriage into a whole new and different place than what the world would place it.

If marriage is not taken in the context of Genesis 1, what does that allow the world to do with marriage?

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In short, the world can make marriage whatever it wants. It can define it in a thousand different ways to suit its desires. Paul explains this in Romans 1:21-32. It is a sad commentary of the world. The world did not like what God had to offer, so it redefined everything to fit its lustful depraved desires.

So what is God’s intention for marriage?

Genesis 1:27 & 2:24 – One man with one woman made into one flesh for life.  
 $1+1=1$

Anything else is not what God intended. I cannot speak for you, but I am not about to tell the Creator of the world and the sustainer of all life that he made a mistake in this area. In fact, our world has proven that the way it redefined marriage has been disastrous.

In regards to marriage,  $1+1=1$  is the right answer. Anything else is wrong.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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"Some trust in chariots,  
and some in horses; but  
we will remember the  
name of the Lord our  
God."  
Psalm 20:7

## I Demand Satisfaction!

### One Plus One Equals One – Genesis 1 – God's Expectations

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Psalm 20:7

I think it is fair to say that most of us at some point look at what we can get out of life. We do have times that we want to serve and give, but if we are investing into something, we want to know what the return is. We want to know if our investment is worth our while.

There is nothing wrong with making wise investments and determining if the return will be worth it. Wise money management is encouraged. Time management is valuable. There are things in life that we want to take into deep consideration.

Marriage is one of those things. You should never just jump into marriage without considering the impact. Couples are wise to sit under a counselor for premarital counseling.

Did you and your spouse have premarital counseling? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you wish you had known about marriage?

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Marriage is an adventure and each one of us brings something into it. They are called expectations.

How would you define an expectation?

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All of us have expectations, whether we admit it or not. You may be expecting to learn something from this study. You may be expecting that your grocery shopping may take one hour. You may be expecting to finish a project at work this week. We all have expectations.

We have expectations in marriage. Some men expect dinner to be on the table when they get home. Some women expect the trash to be carried to the curb. Some men expect sex three times a week, while some woman expect a date night once a week. The lists could go on and on.

To add to the confusion, a husband has things that he thinks his wife expects and a wife has things she thinks her husband expects.

What are some things you think your spouse expects of you?

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*"The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, 'Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.'"*

Genesis 13:14-15

Has there been conflict over your expectations? Why?

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Expectations are probably the number one source of conflict. Some may say finances, but even in that there is conflict over expectations in finances.

When an expectation is not met, how do you respond?

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Unmet expectations can bring conflict, heartache, confusion, doubt, and a whole slew of other unwanted things. We have this inherent desire to demand satisfaction. We deserve to be satisfied. We have worked hard and given so much, now it is our time. Have you found yourself saying something similar? We have a problem.

Self.

Let's look at two examples of expectations in Scripture.

Abram & Lot – Genesis 13-19

Our story picks up with Abram and Lot traveling together. As their families continue to grow, the herdsmen of Lot begin to complain to the herdsmen of Abram. There is not enough room for the cattle and herds. Rather than arguing and creating problems Abram decides to tell Lot that they need to go their separate ways. So Abram tells Lot, "Please separate from me; if the left, then I will go to the right; or if the right, then I will go to the left."

Lot decides to pick the lush fertile land in the valley of the Jordan and moves close to Sodom. Abram gets stuck with Canaan.

Now here is the kicker. Abram had every right to tell Lot which land he could have. Abram had seniority. Instead, he placed his expectation in the Lord. Lot placed his expectation in the good land. Lot chose poorly.

What would you have done in Abram's shoes?

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As the story continues, some kings come out to battle and eventually take Lot and all his stuff with them. Abram has to come and save Lot, but the land Lot once had was ravaged from the war, so Lot finds a house in Sodom. God seeks to destroy Sodom for its wickedness, but allows Lot to flee with whoever will go. In the end, Lot is living in a cave with his two daughters who get him drunk so as to sleep with him just to make sure their family continues. End of story.

Abram, on the other hand, becomes the father of many nations and his story continues to today.

What's the difference? Abram placed his expectation in God. Lot placed it in the land.

*"Some trust in chariots,  
and some in horses; but  
we will remember the  
name of the Lord our  
God."  
Psalm 20:7*

In this account, does Abram ever demand satisfaction? \_\_\_\_\_

The second story is found in Acts 4:36-5:11. This is the classic story of Ananias and Sapphira. Interestingly enough the expectation involved land, but in order to get the context we need to look at the last couple of verses in chapter 4.

A man named Joseph is recorded as selling off some land in order to give to the church. This man has been such an encouragement to the apostles that they give him a nickname of Barnabas which means "son of encouragement". This is our context.

As we enter chapter five, we find a couple doing the exact same thing as Joseph. Both parties sold property for the church. Ananias and Sapphira decided to hold back part of the proceeds for themselves. They then came and laid it at the apostles' feet, just like Joseph. Peter, through the Holy Spirit, could read right through their motives. The issue was not the money, but the motivation to be liked and placed on a pedestal. They wanted the recognition that Joseph had.

They put their expectation in position rather than in God. Their story ends much more abruptly than Lot's. They died on the spot.

Did Barnabas demand fame for his gift? \_\_\_\_\_

Look back at Psalm 20:7 from the beginning. What is the significance of chariots and horses?

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David was essentially saying that the two greatest military advantages mean nothing. David was not about to put his expectation in these. His expectation is in the Lord.

How does this work into marriage?

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In marriage, we have a tendency to expect our spouses to fulfill us and satisfy us. Sure, it is okay to expect dinner as long as you talk about it and agree on it, but I am talking about something that goes far deeper. We have expectations placed on our spouses to fulfill us all the time and in ways that are not possible.

Psalm 90:14 says, "O satisfy us in the morning with Your loving-kindness, That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days." The word for loving-kindness carries with it a covenant loyalty. David is saying that it is in God that I place my expectations to be ultimately satisfied. It is His covenant, His commitment of love to me that will get me through my day.

In the end, God fills my love tank and anything else that comes in spills over into the lives of those around me – primarily my spouse.

How should this impact your marriage?

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God's economy is radically different. If I put my expectation in my wife, the return is limited and measureable, but when I place my expectation in God, the return is unimaginable, and that return not only comes to me, but to my wife and family.

Now that is true investment. I like God's economy.

Oh, and I still take out the trash.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Genesis 1:27

## What's My Job?

### One Plus One Equals One – Genesis 1 – God's Roles

When you first get a new job, one of the first questions you ask is, “What are my responsibilities?”

This is a fair question, and we need to know what our roles are in order to fulfill those roles. In other words, we want to know what is expected of us.

Now, before you take a look back at the previous study, understand that we want to see what is expected of us by God in marriage. As anyone can attest, expectations by each other are unending. God makes it easy on the husband and wife. He only expects one thing from each of them, but we'll get to that.

Betty Friedan was an advocate for the woman's movement and was the first president of the National Organization for Woman, and she considered the role of the full-time homemaker to be stifling. She faults the roles of marriage as the root of divorce when she says, “If divorce has increased by one thousand percent, don't blame the women's movement. Blame the obsolete sex roles on which our marriages were based.”

How does our world see the roles of a husband and wife?

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How does the church see those same roles?

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How would you, as a couple, explain the roles?

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Look back at your answers to the questions. Are they the exact same? I doubt they are, and we wonder why there is confusion. The world, of course, is completely off base. The idea of the father figure continues to provide comedy, while the mother is the leader and head of the home.

The church then comes along to say that the husband is the head of the home and the wife is “second” in command. I have yet to understand where that comes from.

We get our idea of the roles from our parents, who picked their idea up from their parents, and so on. Everybody is looking at everybody else to figure out our responsibility, but nobody is looking at the Creator of the husband and wife. It makes sense that He would know what our roles are.

Here again, we take a look back at the beginning in Genesis.

God determined the roles of the husband and wife at the beginning, and there is only one role for each person. Can you imagine? The man and woman are told that they only have to worry about one responsibility, one role. Oh the relief and joy that comes.

God created Woman from a rib taken from man. Notice man's response, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man." You may not hear this language in the latest romance, but the man breaks out into poetry when he lays eyes on the woman. In his words he conveys love, passion, oneness, affection, and romance. He expresses equality and unity. There is no sense of "second in command", but only love.

Paul says it this way, "Husbands, love your wives!"

Husband, what does it mean to love your wife?

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Wife, when do you feel loved?

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You may have noticed that your answers were not exactly the same. Peter reminds the men to live with their wives in an understanding way. This means we need to love our wives in a way that they feel loved. It is seeking to understand what reaches out to them. Moses' commentary on marriage in Genesis 2:24 further explains the need for the man to reach out. The man is leaving everything and coming after his woman.

Remember, this love is a love that seeks no return. There are no strings attached to this love. The man said, "Bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." There is a very real sense of protection and affection without return. There was no, "I'll love you as long as you do what I say or have sex or be quiet."

God tells husbands to love their wives. God gives no exceptions or qualifications. It does not matter if the wife cooks terribly, looks horrible, or always has a headache. No conditions, husbands, love your wives.

Why is this so hard to do sometimes?

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It goes back to the previous lesson. Self. We are conditioned to think that if we pour into something then that something should pour back, but God does not include that in the role.

Now for the wives.

We can look at the same passage and see that God gave the wives one role. In Genesis 2:18, God says that he will make a helper suitable for man. Notice it is

*"For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."*

Genesis 2:24

*“Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’”*

Genesis 2:18

not a dog or TV remote. God created the woman from the rib of man, and this relationship is different from any other relationship on the face of the planet.

How would you explain what God meant by helper?

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This is a role that is greatly misunderstood. The idea of being a helper has been cast in a bad light. Our world perceives it to mean second rate, lower, and weaker, but that cannot be farther from the truth. Look at man’s response to meeting the woman of his dreams (okay, so she was the only woman, but the matchmaker was God). His response is not a degrading response, but a grateful, excited, and welcoming response.

God, in his awesome wisdom, had the animals parade in front of the man. He named them and noticed that there was a girl and boy of each kind. That is, each kind except for him. God helped man to see his need. The man needed the helper.

Husbands, how do you, through love, express your need for your wife?

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Men, face it, we need help.

Genesis 1:28 gives us the context of the help. God speaks to both the man and woman and says, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over it.” Did you catch all that? God said that this was a joint effort. There is no sense of woman multiplying and man ruling. God gave the command for them to do this together, as one.

1+1=1

Wife, how do you help your husband?

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Husbands, (be honest, even if it means being a little emotional) how is your wife a help to you?

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Just as it was with the husbands, so it is with the wives. There are no strings attached. A wife cannot say, “Forget him, he hasn’t showed me love so I don’t owe him anything!” God did not make that condition. He did not say, “If he loves you, then help him.”

Remember, these roles are not given by your spouse. They are given by God, and when the man and woman seek to fulfill these roles then their marriage becomes more fulfilling. They are doing things they way God intended.

"God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

Genesis 1:28

I wish I could say this is an easy thing to master. I wish I could say that you can go to bed tonight and wake up fulfilling your roles. Unfortunately, there is Genesis 3.

God said:

- Husband, love your wives.
- Wives, help your husbands.

As we continue this study, we will see how these roles play out in a fallen world.

Either way, it is nice knowing there is only one responsibility for me.

Any more and I might get confused.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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## Give Me a Tissue

### One Plus One Equals One – Ruth – God’s Romance

I try to bear through a romance movie for my wife from time to time.

For some reason, romances do not interest most men. They would rather watch a movie that involves world domination rather than romantic boredom. Many women, on the other hand, enjoy sitting down with a box of tissues and a blanket as they cry through a movie. The idea of swords, guns, and fiendish monsters does not attract many women. Some people have tried to mix the two genres, but it is hard to have romance in the midst of carnage. One usually wins out over the other.

Women think men’s movies are unrealistic and men think women’s movies are complete fantasy. Could it be that men and women are different?

What would you consider to be essential parts to a good story?

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Every good story needs good parts to it. It needs something to get your attention at the beginning as it develops the story, and then along comes a villain of sorts, something that has the potential to destroy the efforts of the hero. Finally, in the end, the hero comes through and, if good, the movie will have a sequel.

Every good writer knows the importance of plot development. The author of Ruth is no different.

Have you ever heard a sermon on Ruth? They are fairly rare as many see Ruth as an insignificant book, but I tend to disagree. Ruth provides some powerful insight into the world of marriage and the role of the husband and wife. (See previous study)

Ruth has the makings of a great love story.

If married, how did you meet your spouse?

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We all have different stories. Some of them, I am sure, are pretty crazy. Ruth is no different.

In order to understand the story of Ruth, we must first see the context. Context for this story can be found in Judges 21:25. The world is crazy and everyone is doing whatever they want. No one is following the commands and laws that were laid out on Mount Sinai. It was a land of chaos and carnage. Not much different than today.

*“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”*

*Judges 21:15*

"Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there. Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband."

Ruth 1:1-5

Then we come to Ruth. Ruth is the story of people doing the right thing at the right time in a land that is doing everything wrong. It is a story that goes against the flow and shows the intimacy of God in the affairs of man as He preserves His people.

Read Ruth 1:1-5.

Here is the heartbreaking story of a father and mother having to flee the country because of famine. They come to a neighboring land where their sons meet some nice girls and marry. Eventually, the husband and sons die, leaving behind Naomi and two newlywed widows. Here is where the tissues come out.

Now remember, we want to see the roles of marriage played out in the book of Ruth, so we will first take a look at Ruth.

How would you describe Ruth?

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We have already established that the woman's role is the helper to man. This is not a role of weakness or frailty, but of honor and respect. As the woman discovers her role as helper, she begins to understand her position in Christ and in the marriage. Ephesians 5:22 calls women to be subject to their own husbands. The word uses here carries with it the idea of helper and can be seen in the life of Ruth.

As the story goes, Ruth cannot leave Naomi alone. In fact, Ruth makes a profession of faith in 1:16-17. She exclaims that YAWEH will be her God. She makes the decision to stay.

After they return, Ruth takes up a job gleaning in the fields. Through the course of her work she meets Boaz. As their relationship develops, it comes to a point where Ruth takes the initiative to present herself to Boaz for marriage.

Some commentators believe this book was written by a woman because it shows the initiative of the women in the story. The author is debatable, but the initiative is not. Ruth was willing to subject herself to the Jewish religion and then later subject herself to Boaz. Ruth did not lose her identity in subjection; she merely recognized the importance of her position as she fulfilled the role of a wife.

How would you define submission?

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When Paul tells wives to submit or subject themselves under their husbands, he understands submission as an individual voluntarily placing themselves under the leadership or authority of another

“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”

Ephesians 5:22

individual. The husband is the leader and the wife willingly, voluntarily places herself under his leadership and protection.

Notice, men, Paul commands the women to subject themselves under your leadership. He does not tell men to force their wives under them. In some minds that is not subjection, but slavery.

Probably the best example of subjection is Jesus Christ. Jesus willingly subjected Himself to the Father yet He did not lose His identity or make Himself less God. It is the role Jesus has in the Godhead. This is clearly seen in the Garden when Jesus prays.

So, the role of the woman is to help her husband as she subjects herself to his leadership.

Wife, how are you doing with that?

Now for the husbands.

Take a look at Boaz. There are several aspects that help us to understand love.

How would you describe Boaz?

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Boaz **protected** Ruth. Remember the times were evil and there were men that would have taken advantage of Ruth in a heartbeat, but Boaz sought to protect her. He noticed she was new and asked about her. He then told her to stay in his field and if anyone touched her, they would deal with him. Then there are fighting words!

Boaz **respected** Ruth. In 2:10-11, we see Boaz respecting Ruth and honoring her. She fell to her feet in subjection and humility, asking why he would treat her so fairly. He replied, “It is because your godly character precedes you.” He had heard about the sacrifice she had made and the love she had shown to Naomi. He had heard about the desire to take care of her and live a life of poverty. He respected her.

Boaz **fought** for Ruth. Boaz was not the nearest kinsman redeemer. There was another. This other person had the obligation by Jewish law to marry Ruth and bear a son who would be able to reclaim the inheritance that was to be given through Naomi’s husband. Chapter three and four highlight this battle for Ruth. The other relative did not want to deal with the whole thing and gave up his right. Boaz comes to Ruth and takes her to be his bride.

Husbands are to love their wives through provision (spiritual, as well), through respect and appreciation, and through affection and commitment. These are not the characteristics of a dictator leader, but a loving head that longs to have his wife next to him.

“But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me.’”

Ruth 1:16-17

Husbands, how are you doing with that?

As husbands lead their homes with love and respect, wives will desire to help their husbands as they subject themselves to their husbands’ leadership. As wives subject themselves to their husbands’ leadership, husbands will be more loving. The roles work off each other!

What is one thing that you can do today to fulfill your role (love or help)?

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What is one thing you can do today to fulfill your position (head of home or subjection to head)?

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You may be tempted to wait until the other person starts working on their role, but why wait? Waiting will only keep you from experiencing the blessing of fulfilling your role. Your role is not contingent upon your spouse. It is contingent upon you. Are you going to decide to play the part? It may mean going against the flow. Ruth and Boaz did. Look where it got them!

Finally, probably the most powerful lesson that can be learned is “*chesed*.” This is a Hebrew word that translators have struggled to translate. *Chesed* is a word used for covenant. Inherent in this word is an undying loyalty and love. Sometimes it is translated loving-kindness in the Psalms, but that does not quite capture the meaning. There is the loyalty side of it, and it is used of Ruth’s devotion to Naomi and is inherent in the marriage relationship. The marriage is a covenant with a foundation on *chesed*, an undying, unconditional loyalty and love for your spouse. It is the same *chesed* God has with us.

How would this understanding of *chesed* impact your marriage?

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I need to match my *chesed* with God’s *chesed*. I am glad it is not the other way around, because we would all be in trouble.

Oh, and just in case you missed it, there is a happy ending. Ruth not only bore a child, but this child was Obed, grandfather to King David.

King David. Jesus Christ comes from his line.

Now that is a blessing.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

1 Corinthians 10:31

## The Birds and the Bees

### One Plus One Equals One – 1 Corinthians 10:31 – God’s Intimacy

Evolution is an interesting thought.

It claims that we are getting better and better. It claims that we are becoming more evolved as time passes. It is an interesting thought because it defies all observation and empirical evidence. I realize that evolution claims that these changes take place over a vast amount of time, but is it supposed to get worse before it gets better?

I am thinking of the area of physical intimacy. It is hard for me to imagine that we are evolving to a new state when we have fallen back in this area of physical intimacy. It seems as if there are two sides to this. There are those who will not discuss physical intimacy because they think it is a secret and dirty thing. It has nothing to do with being spiritual and sex will not bring us closer to God. Then there are those who use derogatory terms to describe the act of sex and jokingly speak of it as a pass time or an undesirable duty.

Reading in a technology magazine, one computer scientist claimed that we will one day soon be able to marry robots or have sexual relations with them. We are a world that wants pleasure with no responsibility. Evolution? Yeah, right!

What is your view and attitude towards sex?

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No one really knows where the term “the birds and the bees” came from. There are thoughts that it came from poetry, but either way it is a feeble attempt to explain physical intimacy. I have asked a good number of people if their parents taught them about sex. After they laugh at me, they say no. So where are we learning about sex?

Peers – Now that’s a good thought. We learn about sex from people who do not know about sex because nobody taught them either.

Television – This doesn’t get any better. Television, in an hour program, says to enjoy sex with as many friends as you can. It may not show them going all the way, but waking up the next morning together is a good indication.

Movies – Depending on the rating, movies help us to know the mechanics of physical intimacy in degrees. We forget that movies are for entertainment and need to make money. Truth is not their first priority. In fact, truth is discarded because truth is no fun.

Magazines – It seems magazines know how to improve your sex life or how to get your man to love you more than the other woman. Sex becomes a game and the winner is the better player.

Why are these “resources” a bad influence in the area of physical intimacy?

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So here is what we have, everyone telling everyone how to do something that no one knows how to do. It may be just me, but it seems we are in a heap of

*"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship."*

Romans 12:1

trouble. Of course that brings us to the question, "Who is eligible to tell us about physical intimacy?"

GOD.

He created sex. He instituted the marriage relationship. He told man and woman to multiply. He created the birds and the bees, too, but we'll keep to the subject.

I would go so far as to say that a proper understanding of physical intimacy draws us closer to God. In fact, physical intimacy can be an act of worship to God. Before your mind starts to explode, consider this verse.

"Whether, then, you eat or drink, **or whatever you do**, do all to the glory of God." – I Corinthians 10:31 (emphasis mine)

Is sex part of "whatever you do"? Yes! Picture a house. We pray for our food in the kitchen. We have family devotions or personal devotions in the living room. We pray over our children in their bedrooms. We may even have a 2-minute devotional sitting on the back of the toilet. We invite God into every room of our house, but when it comes to the bedroom and sex we shut Him out. We think, "God doesn't want to be a part of sex. That is just weird!"

Again, He created sex and blessed physical intimacy in the marriage. He wants to be a part of what happens in the bedroom as much as what happens in the kitchen. God is saying, "Whatever you do, even in bed, do it to glorify me!"

Consider Romans 12:1 as well. Paul is encouraging the believers in their walk. He has just explained the difference between disobedient people and those who have embraced God. Paul then says in 12:1 that believers are to present themselves as a holy sacrifice, which is spiritual worship. There is no condition attached to this. He did not say that our lives are to be worship to God except in sex.

God created physical intimacy to be an act of worship to Him.

Why is the previous statement a hard statement for some?

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We have been conditioned to see sex as just an action. The world tells us that sex is a sensual, physical act and there is nothing emotional or spiritual attached to it. Now be prepared, because the world's philosophy justifies its actions. If physical intimacy is just an action then the following can be explained:

- Marriage is not the only place for sex because it is an activity that can be enjoyed by all, hence premarital sex is acceptable.
- Adultery is no longer that big of a deal because it is just an act, there is no connection to the emotions.
- Pornography becomes expectable because sex is just an activity that some enjoy more.
- Flirting has no bearing on a relationship because it is just an action similar to playing ball.

I could continue through the list of sins, but I think you may see what is happening. When I degrade physical intimacy to merely an action, I am saying that it is

not important to build the relationship and it is meant to gratify self. A misunderstanding of physical intimacy leaves the door open for sexual sins to enter. This is not only true of this subject, but any subject.

Consider the fall of man in Genesis 3. Here we have the serpent talking to the woman. The serpent tries to convince the woman that God did not really mean what He said, but the woman did not have what God said completely right. There was a misunderstanding of the truth. That misunderstanding paved the way for the serpent to cast doubt, and then came the fall.

Think through a time when you were misunderstanding a truth. Did it cause problems? Why?

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The truth is, we are to do all to the glory of God and our bodies are our living sacrifice and worship to the Lord. Therefore, the physical intimacy between a husband and wife is an act of worship. Anything outside of that intimacy is sin, as it means to steal worship from God.

How would this idea change your thoughts on physical intimacy?

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It redefines how we think about adultery, flirting, pornography, etc. These things no longer are just bad things as the Bible states, but they also are seen as idols. These things are motivated by our own self-centeredness. The physical intimacy between a husband and wife is not self-centered, but God-centered.

Here is how it works.

- A man or woman seeks to view physical intimacy as something to bring glory to God. Therefore, he or she will not flirt with others or entertain lustful thoughts.
- A man or woman comes to their spouse wanting to serve them through physical intimacy. This time becomes precious and sacred.
- A man or woman will guard their heart and mind from influences that would seek to degrade and destroy this form of worship.

It no longer becomes an opportunity to fulfill my own physical desires, but a privilege to serve my spouse through intimacy. It is a celebration of the marriage union, the oneness, the creation of man and woman, the distinctiveness of mankind, the differences between man and woman, and the sacredness of the marriage bed.

Physical intimacy is to be enjoyed and celebrated between a husband and wife. Sure, it feels good physically outside of marriage, but it is not just a physical action. It involves the entire person and is not blessed outside of marriage and it is not worship to God outside of marriage.

The world wants to lower the standard on physical intimacy. I wonder if we lower the standard on doctors if the world would follow along. Let's just say anyone who can use a fork and knife can use a scalpel. Would you want to have surgery?

Why in the world would we lower the standard in physical intimacy? Do we think if we lower the standard more people can enjoy it? I am sure more people

*"Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge."*

Hebrews 13:4

would enjoy being a doctor, but nobody would benefit from it.

Let's let God make the standard. He seems to know what he is doing.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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## Equal, But Different

### One Plus One Equals One – Song of Solomon 4 – God’s Differences

“How beautiful you are, my darling, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves behind your veil; Your hair is like a flock of goats that have descended from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn ewes Which have come up from their washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost her young. Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate behind your veil. Your neck is like the tower of David, built with rows of stones on which are hung a thousand shields, all the round shields of the mighty men. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle which feed among the lilies. Until the cool of the day When the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense. You are altogether beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you.”

Song of Solomon 4:1-7

Did you know that men and women are different?

I know that seems like an obvious answer, but sit back and think about our world. Does the world try to downplay the differences and exemplify the similarities?

Why does the world want to see men and women as the same?

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We have this mentality that we want to all be treated the same. There are no differences between the genders and anyone who says different is trying to cause problems. It seems as if we like to pronounce our equality, but when it suits our wants we will claim our differences. We want to be treated fairly, but we want to be treated differently. It’s confusing. So which is it?

Both.

As men and women we are equal. We are all created in the image of God. Women do not have less of the image than men and vice versa. We are equal, but we are not the same. Beyond the obvious physical differences, men and women think and feel differently. We see the world differently. Therefore, we can rejoice in our equality and celebrate our differences.

What are some areas that you are different from your spouse?

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Why is it important to recognize and celebrate both your equality and differences?

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As we consider the subject of marriage, we have seen through the previous lessons that the man and woman are equal, but there are also differences such as the roles and positions. There are differences in feelings and communication styles. These differences can be a challenge to marriage, but they can also be a source of growth and understanding. The area of physical intimacy is no different.

Men and women think differently about sex and this can be a source of conflict in the marriage, but God does not leave us without instructions. Song of Solomon 4 is the description of what took place on the honeymoon night and helps us to see how different men and women are.

Why do we need to recognize these differences?

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The answer to this question takes us back to the perspective of physical intimacy. Since it is an act of worship, we are celebrating the differences. It is hard for us to celebrate them if we are not recognizing them and it is hard for us to

*"Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, may you come with me from Lebanon. Journey down from the summit of Amanah, from the summit of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards. You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, my bride; You have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes, with a single strand of your necklace. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, And the fragrance of your oils than all kinds of spices! Your lips, my bride, drip honey; Honey and milk are under your tongue, and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon."*

*Song of Solomon 4:8-11*

serve our spouse if we do not understand how to serve him or her in the differences.

Turn in your Bible to Song of Solomon 4. You may not have spent much time in this book, but it has a lot to offer for a better understanding of marriage. There is one fact that we must recognize in understanding men and women.

Men's desire for physical intimacy is equal to women's desire for affection.

This one fact is foundational in the physical intimacy of marriage. Notice, it does not say men do not desire affection and women do not desire physical intimacy. Men do desire affection and women do desire physical intimacy, but the stronger desires are what we are more aware of and that is the way God made man and woman.

Why is it important to understand that God made man and woman this way?

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It is true that these desires can be misdirected, manipulated, and abused, and that is why we are in the fix we are today with all the sexual perversion found in both genders. These God given desires, when controlled by the flesh, will cause problems and lead to sin. But on the flip-side, these God given desires, when controlled by the spirit, can bring joy and satisfaction in each other. Read through verses 1-7 of chapter 4.

Here is the picture. The bride and groom have pulled away from the wedding party and entered the tent. They are coming to a time of physical intimacy that they have kept themselves for. The previous chapters show the anticipation that has led them to this point. They are now standing before each other naked and unashamed as God intends. The man begins to describe what he sees. He is really admiring her body, hence our first point.

**A man's strong sexual drive is normal.** This groom is getting into what she looks like. He starts with her entire body, but quickly starts naming off parts. He talks about her eyes and hair. He mentions her neck and teeth. He desires to see his bride. Men, on average, think about sex thirty times a day and desire intimacy two to three times a week. On average, women only think about it once a day. He is all about her body, and this is normal, but notice he understands that a women desires affection, which is the next point.

**A woman's strong desire for affection is normal.** The bride is taking in the comments he is making about her. She is soaking in what he is saying. Looking back into the previous chapters, we see that this groom has a history of complimenting and romancing his bride. He makes special efforts to show his love for her outside of the bedroom. A woman desires this type of affection. She desires to hear her groom speak words of affection.

Why is it important to understand that your spouse's desire is equal to yours?

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I would encourage you to talk to your spouse about these desires. They are equal, but different.

We continue through this night of passion and desire. Read verses 8-16. At this point in our picture the groom and bride are now embracing. They are holding each other and the groom continues to speak, which brings us to our second observation.

"A garden locked is my sister, my bride, A rock garden locked, a spring garden locked, a spring sealed up. Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates With choice fruits, henna with nard plants, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, With all the trees of frankincense, Myrrh and aloes, along with all the finest spices. You are a garden spring, A well of fresh water, And streams flowing from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind, and come, wind of the south; make my garden breathe out fragrance, let its spices be wafted abroad. May my beloved come into his garden And eat its choice fruits!"

Song of Solomon 4:12-16

**A man sees physical intimacy as a way to paradise.** This groom is now embracing his bride and speaking words of respect to her. He calls her his bride and his sister. He is telling her what she means to him. He is in paradise. A man sees intimacy as paradise. The rest of the world could be crumbling down around him, but if he is able to embrace his wife, everything is perfect. If he is able to feel his wife's body against his then the feelings and troubles of the day disappear. Intimacy is paradise for the man, but women are different.

**A woman sees physical intimacy as a result of paradise.** This bride has come closer to her groom. She has allowed him to embrace her because of the affection he has shown her. This entire chapter is spoken by the groom with the exception of the final verse. Verse sixteen is the bride speaking out. The groom has met her need of affection and taken her into paradise. She has enjoyed his words and relished his affection. As a result she gives herself to him. In verse sixteen she says, "Take me, I'm yours!"

Talk to each other about how you perceive intimacy to be paradise. Remember, you are equal, but different.

There is one more point to be made about the differences.

**A man's experience in intimacy reassures his manhood.** A man may have lost his job, wrecked the car, and lost his wallet, but if he enjoys intimacy with his wife, then he feels like a man. I believe this truth ties in to the aspect of a woman fulfilling her role as helper. A woman helps a man feel like a man in physical intimacy. A man has a desire to fulfill his wife sexually. When he does this then he is fulfilled. He feels like his wife's hero and knight in shining armor.

**A woman's experience in intimacy reassures her security.** When a man truly shows his wife affection and seeks to fulfill his wife, she will feel safe and secure. She will feel as if nothing can harm her. She has been treated with affection and respect. She has been given love and admiration. She feels every part a woman. She feels complete and satisfied.

It is important to understand the deeper aspect of sexual intimacy and its effects on both the husband and the wife because they are equal, but different.

How does noting these truths affect your thinking?

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Now we need to come back to our perspective of physical intimacy. Sex is not just an action, but an act of worship. Therefore, there should be an emphasis on the atmosphere more than the act. Here are some thoughts to consider.

- Understand that the woman will usually need more time to be prepared for intimacy. This is the idea that men need to show affection to their wives throughout the day. This can be done by appreciating her work, helping her with the dishes, and letting her know you love her. A dozen roses and doing dishes could both work. Women will want to show appreciation for the affection. A man needs to know if what he is doing is worth doing.
- Understand that intimacy is meant to share the complete person. This is to say that the man and woman should talk about their intimacy. Tell each other what is comfortable and what is not. Take time to talk through some of the finer points of sex. Remember that Solomon continued to use words to reassure and encourage his bride. In other words, don't rush things. Take your time and do it right.

- Finally, men have been tasked as the head of the home. Therefore, men are encouraged to take the initiative. This does not mean demanding sex, but it does mean intentionally taking the time to understand and show affection to your wife. It means taking the effort to be romantic and loving. If the man will be willing to show affection to his wife, then the wife will be willing to give herself to her husband. Take another look at the passage. It is the man who is taking the initiative and who shows affection. He is seeking to meet her needs through servant love. In the end, she desires to present herself to her husband. Husbands love your wives.

This all comes back to our perspective of sex. If you see it as just an act, then you will struggle at seeing how your spouse is different from you. When you embrace sex as an act of worship to God, then you will seek to glorify Him as you give yourself to your spouse.

God designed physical intimacy to be satisfying for both the man and woman. He wants both husband and wife to enjoy the passionate, physical joys of satisfying each other. He wants them to see that they are equal yet different and have fun with those differences.

So go talk to your spouse. Seek to understand how he or she ticks and then get in sync.

It is then that you will experience that  $1+1=1$ .

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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# Do You Hear What I Hear?

## One Plus One Equals One – Ephesians 4 – God’s Solution

Have you ever played “the telephone game”?

I am sure it has gone by several names, but the idea is that one person whispers something to someone else. The “phone” conversation is then passed around the circle until it reaches the last person, who tells everyone what they thought they heard. Of course, it is drastically different from what it began as and everyone laughs at how it ended up.

It is a fun game, unless it is being played in marriage.

When was the last time you had bad communication with your spouse?

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Often, bad communication leads to bad comments which lead to bad criticism which leads to bad battles. Let’s face it, communication or lack thereof is a huge problem in marriage. In fact, it is probably the number problem that destroys marriages. We do not know how to communicate and in turn we do not know how to fight, so we are left with injured hearts, crushed spirits, and broken marriages.

Paul says in Romans 12:18 that we are to live at peace with one another. Later in 14:19, he calls us to pursue peace and the building up of one another. Sometimes we do this everywhere but in the home. We try to live at peace with the boss, the neighbor, the drycleaners, and the pizza delivery man, but when it comes to the spouse we throw peace out the window.

Why do we tend to fight most with our spouse?

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Here is a little hint that will instantly strengthen your marriage when practiced. Talk.

I know it sounds simple, but every single marriage would grow if the husband and wife talked more to each other about heart issues rather than just the weather. Every marriage would benefit if the husband and wife read books on communication and then practiced it in their marriage.

Here is an example that shows the need to learn about communication.

Which would you rather lose, your eyesight or your hearing? \_\_\_\_\_

Ask your spouse the same question. Here is the insight. Those who would rather lose their eyesight are more focused on what is being said in a conversation. They will listen to voice inflection and tone. They will hear what is being said and how it is being said. Those who would rather lose their hearing will pay

*“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”*

Romans 12:18

*“So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”*

Romans 14:19

more attention to body language. They will hear what is being said, but if the body language says something different, then they go with that. It helps to learn about communication.

It also helps to evaluate communication.

This will mean being open and honest with each other. Here are some questions to get you going.

- How well do I communicate? What is good and what is bad?
- How well do I listen? What tells you I am listening?
- Do I tend to interrupt you at times?
- Do I jump to conclusions?
- Do I show you that I am involved in the conversation?
- Is there something I do that irritates you in conversation?

Now, I realize these may be some challenging questions, but they will help you to work through and discover how to better communicate with your spouse. Better communication leads to better conversation, which leads to better communion, which leads to better fulfillment. One person said that feelings of happiness in marriage have a direct connection to the way a husband and wife relate to each other. It all works together.

Even if it is conflict.

Conflict can be one of the more rewarding and growing times in your marriage when done correctly. Conflict cannot be avoided. It can be ignored, but that does not mean it went away. There will always be conflict. Conflict is simply a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates another person.

What was the last conflict you had with your spouse?

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How well (or not so well) did you handle it?

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Here again we have a bad perspective on conflict. We see conflict as a terrible thing that destroys marriages. Good conflict does not destroy marriages, but bad conflict can hurt and wound each other and others.

How can conflict be good?

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Conflict can help us to see another point of view. It can bring us into a better understanding of our spouse. It can also teach us something about ourselves that we need to work on, but there is another wrong perspective that we have of conflict. We often see our spouse as the bad guy in the conflict. If your spouse disagrees with you then they are against you. Your argument is a "me versus my spouse" mentality. This causes you to attack your spouse and undermine

*“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.”*

*Ephesians 4:25-27*

*“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*

*Ephesians 4:29-32*

the very foundation of love that you have for him or her. Consider the words of Ken Sande.

“As long as we see other people as our adversaries and focus our attacks on them, we will give no thought to guarding against our most dangerous enemy.”<sup>1</sup>

Do you see the real enemy in the conflict? The real enemy is not your spouse, but the evil one who is roaming about seeking whom he will destroy (1 Peter 5:9). Remember that God has made the man and woman one. Even in conflict they can be an example of oneness as they resolve their differences. Satan would want the man and woman to be against each other. He would want them to be on opposite sides, but that is not the case. The man and woman are on the same side and Satan is the enemy.

Seeing Satan as the true enemy in conflict, how will that affect your conflict?

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Thankfully, God helps us to work through conflict and see that it can be used to draw us closer to Christ and to each other. Ephesians 4 provides a step by step process to conflict resolution. As you find yourself at odds with your spouse, take time to work through these steps to bring about resolution.

1. **Speak truth to each other** (4:25). This means that you will refrain from using general statements like, “you always” or “you never”. It means that you are going to address the issue in truth without bring drama or exaggeration into it.
2. **Don’t hold on to anger** (4:26) – Notice that the verse says there will be times when you get angry, but the idea is that you do not sin in your anger and you do not hold onto it. There may be times that you need to step away from the conflict or conversation and take a few moments to settle down. It is better to pause and say something true (first step) than to spout off and say something wrong. The key here is stepping away for a little time. Too much time will give the devil a foothold. Hence, the need to not let the sun go down on your wrath. This may mean some late nights.
3. **Speak what is edifying** (4:29). This is another check and balance in regards to your mouth. As you are in the midst of conflict it is important to remember that you should be trying to work towards resolution. Words that are edifying will accomplish that. Words that are degrading will not. At this point it is not a matter of proving your point but talking about how to work through the issue.
4. **Be filled with the Spirit** (4:30). Notice that there has been a progression. It is not until you have spoken truth, let go of anger, and started working towards a solution that you can hear the Holy Spirit. Part of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. It is here that the conflict begins to take a different twist.
5. **Forgive each other** (4:32). As the Spirit fills us, we are able to truly forgive. Ken Sande says, “Unforgiveness is the poison we drink, hoping others will die.”<sup>2</sup> When we do not forgive, it begins to eat away at us

<sup>1</sup>Ken Sande Peacemaker, Baker, Michigan, 2004. Page51

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, Page208

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

Ephesians 5:1-2

and allows Satan to drive a wedge further and further between us and our spouse. It is the Spirit that brings us to the point of admitting we were wrong and asking for forgiveness.

6. **Sacrifice self** (5:1-2). Paul tells us to be imitators of Christ to the point of sacrificing ourselves in love. Marriage is no longer two people just living together. It is two people becoming one. Two people setting aside their own desires and differences for the benefit of the one. Conflict is an opportunity to bring a husband and wife back into oneness.

Have you ever considered conflict as a road to oneness? How does this affect your thinking?

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This puts conflict into a whole new light. I no longer see conflict as something that comes between my spouse and me. I see it as something that my spouse and I work through together.

Interesting, isn't it? Even in conflict, God designed the marriage to work together.

Another evidence of 1+1=1.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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“Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Hebrews 13:4

## Picture Perfect

### One Plus One Equals One – Hebrews 13:4 – God’s Picture

I feel bad for store photographers.

They have a hard job. They have to try and get a good picture of a child that is screaming and crying because they have to sit still and cannot play with all the photo props. There are brief seconds that the child will smile and the photographer has to be ready to click the button. Other times, it comes down to acting like a crazy person just to get the kid to laugh.

It’s a hard job and I am glad someone else is doing it.

Have you seen or experienced an unfortunate photography session of a child? How did it go?

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Why do some experience something like this?

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To put it plainly, the child does not want the picture; he or she wants something else. It is hard to fault the child, because they did not choose to get all dressed up and sit in a waiting room for an hour. During that wait, they could do nothing because it could mess up their clothes. Now they are sitting on a hard box with “toys” all around them that they cannot play with.

Poor kids. If only they knew that the photographer is trying to capture a good picture that will be cherished for many years. It would be a picture that is mailed to grandparents and sent off to friends. It would be pulled out at every bingo game and family get together.

So what is our excuse when it comes to marriage?

God has the perfect picture of marriage that He wants to share with us. He knows exactly how it should be and wants to help us understand it, but we, like the child, squirm and cry as we look around at all the other things that pull at our attention. We are not willing to see the blessings that come from God’s picture. Rather, we choose to give in to our own selfish desires and wants. We would rather reach for a career or hobby than to work at our marriage. If only we would sit still and look at God’s picture.

Why do we get anxious about working on the marriage relationship?

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You may be wondering why I am so adamant about marriage. If you have worked through this series, you understand that the marriage the world portrays is nothing like the marriage that God pictures. Marriage is a serious relationship that takes work, and we are always more prone to take the easy road rather than the hard road.

There is a small verse in Hebrews that gives us some insight into the magnitude and majesty of the marriage as God pictures it.

"If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

1 Peter 1:17-19

"For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens."

Hebrews 7:26

Read Hebrews 13:4

The author of Hebrews has captured the picture that God intends for marriage. He states two things about marriage.

First, marriage is **precious**.

The word *timios* is translated as honorable and is used on a few other occasions in the New Testament. It is used of good reputation (Acts 5:34), of valuable stones, (1 Corinthians 3:12, Revelation 17:4, 18:12), of faith (1 Peter 1:7), and finally, of Christ's blood.

1 Peter 1:17-19 gives us an indication of the value placed on *timios*. Peter explains that we have not been redeemed through things like silver and gold, but through the precious blood of Christ. Christ's blood is precious to those who have been washed white as snow. It is through His shed blood that we are able to be called sons of God. You cannot buy salvation or work for it. The cost of salvation is too great for us to handle. That is why it is so precious and valuable.

Marriage is in the same boat. Peter explains that marriage is to be valued or honored by all. It should be considered priceless to the husband, the wife, the kids, the pastor, the neighbor, and everyone else. It is not like gold and silver which perishes. It is not like the things of this world that are here today and gone tomorrow. Marriage is a valuable, costly, honorable covenant.

God pictures marriage as valuable and honorable. It ranks up there with the precious blood of Christ.

How would you rate your value of marriage? What can you do to reach God's picture?

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It starts with perspective. Begin now to elevate your marriage. Do not let it fall to the back burner, but see it as priceless.

Secondly, marriage is **pure**.

This is a word used only a few times, yet these few times help us to see the purity of marriage. James speaks of true religion that is undefiled and will minister to the orphans and the widows. Peter explains that our inheritance in heaven is incorruptible and pure. But the most telling passage is here in Hebrews. In 7:26, the author uses the word to describe our High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Again, we are brought back to Christ. First, it was his precious blood and now it is the purity of His being. We have a High Priest that is free from the ravages of sin. He does not need to go daily to offer up a sacrifice for His own sins. He is pure and undefiled.

Marriage is raised to this same standard. It is to be pure and undefiled by the world. It is to be cleansed and kept clean.

How has the world infected your marriage?

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It is hard to keep the marriage bed pure. It takes work, but it is the picture God has for marriage. It may mean changing your movie standards or television watching. It may mean spending more time with one couple and not as much

“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.”

Ephesians 5:23

with another. It may mean leaving a job to find one where temptation is not as strong. It may even mean having a conversation with your spouse and confessing sin. I wish I could tell you an easy fix to reach purity, but it is different for every couple.

What are some things that you can do to become undefiled in your marriage?

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Remember, it may be something as simple as a weekly sitcom that eats away at your marriage, but it could also be something as serious as an unhealthy relationship. Take time to clean it up.

God’s picture of marriage is one that is precious and pure. It is a beautiful picture, made even more beautiful because it is a picture of Christ and the church. We have looked into the passage in Ephesians 5:22-33. The marriage between a man and a woman under God is a picture of the relationship that Christ has with the church. Christ gave himself up for the church to present a church that is precious and pure.

What does that say to you when Paul compares marriage with Christ and the church?

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This is the way marriage is intended to be. God created it to be a beautiful picture, a perfect picture. God desires us to see this picture and marvel at the marriage relationship. It is one plus one equals one.

A good painting will capture your attention and hold your mind. It will fix your eyes on details, yet keep you at a distance so you can see the entire picture. There is detail in each stroke or each facet. There is beauty in each little part, yet the entirety shows the grandeur and majesty of the pieces coming together as one to make the whole. A painting such as this is precious and pure.

How much more is marriage.

Your marriage can be that picture. I know that you doubt that. I know that you cannot imagine your marriage ever coming to the point of being a beautiful picture. You have experienced heartaches and pains and there may even have been separation or divorce. You see your marriage as a mess rather than a masterpiece.

Matthew 19:26 – “And looking at them Jesus said to them, ‘With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

Marriage, along with life, is not about you or your spouse. It is about God. Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:20 that God is able to do far more beyond all that we ask or think. God wants to build your marriage into something that will continue to glorify Him.

Here are some suggestions to help:

Spend time each day in prayer for your marriage in specific ways.

Spend time in God’s Word.

Revisit this study and continue to keep God’s perspective before you.

*“For how do you know,  
O wife, whether you  
will save your husband?  
Or how do you know,  
O husband, whether  
you will save your  
wife?”*

1 Corinthians 7:16

Talk with your spouse about marriage. Go on dates – just the two of you.

Find two or three couples that you believe have a good marriage and spend time with them.

Attend marriage conferences and seminars.

Read books on marriage. You will never run out of books to read.

Stay away from things that degrade and downplay marriage (materials, media, music, people).

These are just a few things that you might consider.

Do you have other suggestions that might help?

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There may be those who have an unbelieving spouse. Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 7:16 that you may be the very tool that God uses to bring your spouse to the cross. As you reach for God’s picture of marriage, your spouse will see something that is different than what the world has to offer.

Marriage is a beautiful relationship that calls a man and a woman to come together in worship to God as husband and wife. There is no other relationship like it on this planet. The world will try to convince you otherwise, but do not listen to the world. It is not about you – it is about God.

This relationship will take work. It will take a lot of work because we are not inclined to give up our rights, but in the economy of God, whoever tries to run their own life, loses it, but those who surrender gain it.

Micah 6:8 explains that God desires us to live in obedience through love with humility. In the end, marriage is a matter of obedience.

Obedience is a matter of the heart.

Is your heart surrendered?

Surrender is the best thing you can do. Your marriage and the rest of your life will thank you for it.

“Dear Father, I pray for surrender. I know that daily there are things that I take back or things that I cling to, but, Lord, help me to lay them down at your feet. Remind me that my marriage and my life is not about me, it’s about you. Glorify yourself through me. Thank you. Amen.”

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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By the way, if you remember, there was a little quiz in the beginning. These answers were talked about throughout the study, but for those who would like to check their answers, here they are.

1. When was marriage instituted?

Marriage was instituted in the Garden of Eden.

2. Why was marriage instituted?

Marriage was instituted because it was not good that man should be alone – he needed a helper.

3. Who created and instituted marriage?

God instituted marriage.

4. Out of the Ten Commandments, two reference marriage. What are they?

Do not commit adultery and do not covet (your neighbors wife).

5. Scripture uses marriage as an analogy for what relationship in the Old Testament?

God and Israel.

6. Scripture uses marriage as an analogy for what relationship in the New Testament?

Christ and the Church.

7. What is one role of the husband?

Love his own wife.

8. What is the one role of the wife?

Help her own husband.

9. Why was sex created?

To glorify God.

10. Is there ever a point within marriage that it can never be restored?

No, with God all things are possible.

11. How does the present marriage of parents affect the future marriage of children?

Children build their ideas and perspective of marriage and family based on their personal experiences.



Other studies are available at  
[www.libertyonlineministries.com](http://www.libertyonlineministries.com), including:

By Faith – (Hebrews 11)

One Another

The Armor of God – (Ephesians 6)

The Road to Happiness – Beatitudes (Matthew 5)

Strengthening Your Moral Fiber – Moral Purity (Proverbs 7)

The Marks of Genuine Godliness – Integrity (Psalm 15)

Practical Faith – (James)